



*Left, birds need water to bath and drink. They like a birdbath with an inch of water and a rough, natural surface.
Right, yaupon and other natives make great plantings around bird feeders and baths.*

ATTRACTING BIRDS AND BUTTERFLIES TO YOUR BACKYARD

By Kathy Adams Clark

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Gardens big or small can be a haven for birds. Birds will come to a large lot with trees and grass or a balcony with container plants.

- Birds need three things
 - Food
 - Water
 - Shelter

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Food is the first big consideration to bringing birds into your garden. Shelled sunflower seeds are a favorite because the hulls have been removed and no waste falls to the ground to attract mice and rats. Shelled sunflower seed is a bit more expensive but the food goes farther because there is no waste.

Avoid packaged birdfeed that contain millet, milo, and wheat. Watch for little white seeds common in grocery store wild bird feed. Northern cardinals, blue jays, and Carolina chickadee don't eat these seeds. Blackbird and grackles do, though.

- Birdfeed from area nature stores such as Wild Bird Unlimited, feed stores, and locally owned garden centers is usually fresher than feed from big box stores.

Birds like suet. Suet is a mixture of seeds, nuts, and fruit held together with a peanut butter matrix. Carolina wrens, pine warblers, and red-bellied woodpeckers love suet cakes.

- Avoid suet cakes held together with a whitish or fat-based matrix.
- Those spoil in our heat.
- They are designed for cooler, northern climates.

Bird baths are a great way to add water to your habitat.

- Traditional concrete bird baths are best.
- Birds only need an inch of water to drink or bath.
- Concrete bird baths last twenty or more years.

The rough surface of a concrete bird bath gives birds something they can grip in the event they need to quickly fly away to avoid a predator. Glass or ceramic bird baths are pretty but the bathing area needs to be rough. Toss in a few handfuls of dirt and let a bit of algae grow. This creates a natural surface birds prefer.



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Left, shelled sunflower seed has minimal waste and attracts a variety of birds including red-bellied woodpeckers. Right, nest boxes with no perch or ornaments are a great way to provide shelter for birds during the nesting season. Perches and ornaments give predators a grip so they can predate the nest. Kathy Adams Clark photos

Shelter is the last item needed. Birds need a place to hide when a hawk or cat enters the area. Place feeders and birdbaths five to ten feet from a tree, shrub, or potted plant. Birds won't cross a vast open area to feed or bathe. Place plants on two sides to create an ideal habitat.

- Consider natives when planting around feeders in a yard or on a balcony.
 - Yaupon
 - American beautyberry
 - Golden dewdrop (Duranta)
 - Porterweed (Stachytarpheta)

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